



*General John J. Pershing, commanding general of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF), decorating officers of the Eighty-ninth Division at Treves, Germany.*

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# AN “ALL KANSAS” REGIMENT

## The 353d Infantry Goes to War

*by Sandra Reddish*

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**T**he United States of America entered the First World War in April 1917 with great enthusiasm, but the reality facing the U.S. government, especially the War Department, was sobering. Woefully unprepared, the military was in no condition to immediately send men and equipment to fight in France. The first and foremost deficiency was the numbers of men needed to take up arms. Relying upon volunteers to fill the ranks was not enough. The solution came in the form of nationwide conscription—commonly referred to as the draft.

Soon young men from throughout the Great Plains left their farms and small-town homes and donned army uniforms. While some left with their National Guard units, others waited for the draft or volunteered for military service. The majority of Kansans served with the Thirty-fifth or Eighty-ninth Divisions. Both divisions experienced combat in France but encountered very different results.

The Thirty-fifth Division consisted of Kansas and Missouri National Guard units, and its men were familiar with military culture. On the other hand, the Eighty-ninth Division comprised draftees from the Central Plains states, most having no previous encounter with military life. Largely due to command blunders, the Thirty-fifth experienced difficulties after the opening weeks of the Meuse-Argonne campaign, thus marring its overall combat performance. The Eighty-ninth performed well through the Saint-Mihiel

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and Meuse-Argonne campaigns and gained favorable notice from General John J. Pershing, commanding general of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF). Indeed, after the war, Pershing considered the Eighty-ninth Division, which included the 353d Infantry "All Kansas" Regiment, among his top four divisions that fought in France.<sup>1</sup>

For nearly three years after August 1914 Americans stood by and watched Europe implode. On June 28, 1914, the assassination of a little-known archduke and his wife from the Austria-Hungary Empire became the impetus that drew European countries into a war that none ever imagined would escalate to such a degree.<sup>2</sup> Americans witnessed the carnage by way of newspapers, periodicals, books, photos, and films. U.S. public opinion generally favored neutrality, keeping out of that "European mess," but Americans continued to trade with the embattled countries of Europe and overwhelmingly favored the Allied nations. America moved from observer to participant on April 6, 1917, when Congress voted in favor of President Woodrow Wilson's request for a declaration of war against Germany.

Newspaper headlines throughout the United States announced the call to arms, and thousands of men rushed to recruiting offices, eager to join up and fight the "Huns." Others waited to see what would happen next. They did not have long to wait because the government already planned to invoke conscription, and on May 18, 1917, Congress passed the Selective Service Act. Nationwide, men between the ages of twenty-one and thirty were required to register for a national lottery to see who would enter the army. Within three weeks ten million men registered for America's first draft since the Civil War. By the time the war ended on November 11, 1918, the draft comprised 2.8 million men—72 percent of the army's total manpower and half that of the AEF.<sup>3</sup>

At the beginning, however, the U.S. Army was unimpressive by European standards. According to a worldwide ranking, America's military force fell below even six-

teenth-ranked Portugal. "On 1 April 1917 the regular army consisted of only 5,791 officers and 121,797 enlisted men," explained historian Bryon Farwell. "There were 66,594 National Guardsmen in federal service (most serving on the Mexican Border) and 101,174 National Guardsmen still under state control, but none of these troops were organized or equipped for service in Europe."<sup>4</sup> Army manpower totaled fewer than three hundred thousand men, a paltry number compared with the huge war machines of Britain, France, Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary.

The army was also not prepared to fight a modern war. Grossly deficient in manpower, it lacked about everything to mobilize a significantly sized force, including equipment, weapons, supplies, training facilities, and a commander. The senior generals considered for command of the AEF were Leonard Wood, J. Franklin Bell, Thomas H. Barry, Hugh L. Scott, Tasker H. Bliss, and John J. Pershing. Missing from this list was Major General Frederick Funston, a Kansan who had died of a heart attack in February. Prior to his untimely death at age fifty-one, Funston held an excellent chance of becoming the AEF commander due to his recent experience on the Mexican border. Funston also was the recipient of the Medal of Honor for his actions during the war against insurgents in the Philippine Islands. To honor Funston, a new training facility for incoming draftees, located on the eastern outskirts of Fort Riley, Kansas, was named Camp Funston.

A review of possible commanders started immediately. Bell and Barry suffered from ill health, Scott and Bliss planned to retire within a year, and Wood was deemed a political general with ties to former president Theodore Roosevelt. Besides possessing the "look" of a fit and trim commander, Pershing was not a political officer and had just returned from commanding the American Expeditionary Forces in Mexico. The suspense did not last very long.<sup>5</sup>

During the first week in May 1917 Pershing received a personal message from General Scott, army chief of staff. General Pershing was to start selecting the men and regiments that eventually would go "over there." Initially, Pershing believed he would command a division, but af-

1. The other three were the First and Second Division (regular army) and the Forty-second Division (National Guard). See William M. Wright, *Meuse-Argonne Diary*, ed. Robert H. Ferrell (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 1.

2. Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophia, were assassinated in Sarajevo. By the time America entered the war, the main countries of Great Britain, France, and Russia were fighting against Germany and Austri-Hungary.

3. John Whiteclay Chambers III, *To Raise An Army: The Draft Comes to Modern America* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 184, 200.

4. Bryon Farwell, *OVER THERE—The United States in the Great War, 1917-1919* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1999), 38.

5. Donald Smythe, *Pershing—General of the Armies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 1, 3.



ter meeting with Secretary of War Newton Baker the general found himself commanding the entire AEF with almost unlimited power over the troops in France. By June, Pershing and his staff were in Europe preparing for the army's arrival.<sup>6</sup>

Back in the states the military grappled with its immediate growing pains. First and foremost was the problem of creating more divisions. A few regular army divisions existed, but National Guardsmen and draftees would fill the majority of these newly created divisions. Initially, the divisions were designated as regular army, National Guard, and national army. By 1918 these designations were eliminated, and every soldier served in the army.

The Eighty-ninth Division was one of these new national army divisions. It consisted of the 353d, 354th, 355th, and 356th Infantry Regiments; 341st and 342d Machine Gun Battalions; 340th, 341st, and 342d Field Artillery Regiments; 314th Trench Mortar Battery; 314th Field Signal Battalion; 314th Engineer Regiment; Supply; Trains; Infirmary; and Headquarters.<sup>7</sup> Assigned to command this division of draftees was Major General Leonard Wood.

During August 1917 the Eighty-ninth Division began to organize at Camp Funston. Initial arrivals were officers from the "Regular army, Officers' Reserve Corps and National Army Officers from the First Officers' Training Camp."<sup>8</sup> The following month Camp Funston received its July draftees, and it soon became the home of the following units: Eighty-ninth Division, 164th Depot Brigade, and parts of the all black Ninety-second Division.

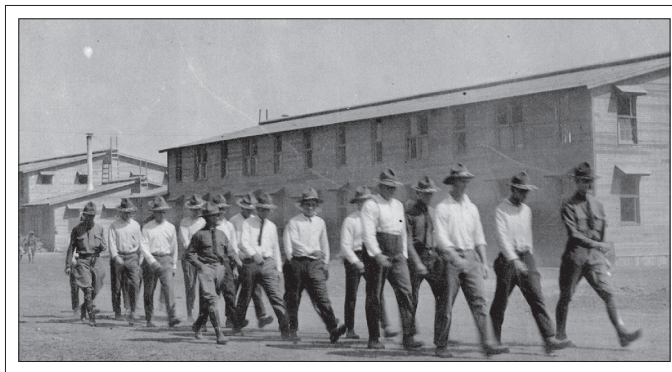
The majority of draftees came from Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, and South Dakota, and they were assigned by state to specific regiments and units. Kansas men made up the 353d Regiment; men from Nebraska constituted the 355th Regiment and 314th Ammunition Train; and Missourians formed the 354th and 356th Regiments.<sup>9</sup> The rest of the men were assigned to the remaining units.

6. John S.D. Eisenhower, *YANKS—The Epic Story of the American Army in World War I* (New York: Free Press, 2001), 33–34.

7. World War I divisions comprised twenty-eight thousand officers and enlisted men. Regiments comprised thirty-eight hundred officers and enlisted men.

8. U.S. Battle Monuments Commission, *89th Division, Summary of Operations in the World War* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1944), 1. The 353d Infantry Regiment was only one component of the Eighty-ninth Division.

9. George H. English Jr., *History of the 89th Division* (Denver, Colo.: Smith Brooks, 1920), 22.



*By war's ended, the draft, which passed Congress on May 18, 1917, comprised 2.8 million men—72 percent of the army's total manpower and half that of the AEF. Many of these draftees, such as the ones depicted above, were inducted at Camp Funston.*

According to Charles F. Dienst, chief historian of the 353d, the regiment's designated birthday was September 5, 1917. Its commanding officer was Colonel James H. Reeves, a West Pointer and career officer whose previous experiences consisted of advance military schooling, overseas, and command assignments. The "All Kansas" Regiment, which received its nickname because of the early arrival of 2,974 draftees from within Kansas, maintained its identity to war's end—replacements hailed from various states, but the enlisted ranks were 60 percent Kansans.<sup>10</sup>

In early September and even into the fall of 1917 many training camps (cantonments) were works-in-progress without adequate billeting quarters and other facilities. Camp Funston was no different. While not the regular army, an army of laborers and craftsmen worked feverishly to construct buildings and put the camp in working order. Little time could be wasted as 5 percent of the initial draftees arrived on September 5 and the next 40 percent on September 19.<sup>11</sup>

Most men left their hometowns by train and arrived at camp later in the evening or at night. A typical scenario for these men was to walk in semi-order to the camp. Once inside its confines, they would gather their bed ticking, stuff it with straw or hay, and find a cot or a place on the barrack floor. Next, it was off to the supply room to pick up whatever clothing and blankets were available. If any time remained, draftees might eat a quick meal at the mess hall

10. Charles F. Dienst, *History of the 353rd Infantry Regiment* (Wichita, Kans.: Eagle Press, 1921), ix, 1, 3.

11. *Ibid.*, 8



or take a shower, all the while learning the army tradition of “hurry up and wait.”<sup>12</sup>

Not all draftees were ignorant of military life. Some men either attended or graduated from colleges requiring courses in the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC). Others previously had served in the National Guard. Benjamin H. “Harry” Gilmore, a draftee from El Dorado, had graduated from Kansas State Agricultural College in 1914 and was somewhat familiar with army training, because the college required compulsory service.<sup>13</sup>

Gilmore was among the September 19 arrivals; assigned to Company D, 353d Infantry Regiment, he remained with the company and regiment until his discharge in June 1919. Gilmore wasted little time in keeping his family apprised of his military life. In his first letter home he described his initial night at camp:

We got to Camp about 11:30 p.m. and marched about a mile to our bunk house. The next thing we did was to take a cold shower bath. You can imagine how it felt to strip out doors and take a cold shower about midnight before they would let us in our barracks. They gave us a towel and a cake of soap and when we got our bath we got a heavy woolen blanket for clothing and then got clean cloths [*sic*], consisting of woolen underwear, a wool shirt, overalls, jumper, two pair of sox [*sic*], a pair of big heavy drill shoes, another blanket, another towel, and a bag to put our stuff in; it contained a hairbrush, toothbrush, and our eating tools. Our eating tools are a big cup and a skillet that folds up and carries the knife, fork, and spoon. . . . We got a lunch here then we went to bed which consisted of a bunch individual straw ticks thrown on the floor of a large room. They were two or three apart with isles running along even two rows. Well we got to sleep sometimes about 3:00 P.M.<sup>14</sup>

In his second letter Gilmore again wrote about his experiences and gave the family a time schedule of his activities:

12. Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End All Wars: The American Military Experience in World War I* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 65.

13. “Living With War,” *Kansas State Collegian* (Manhattan), October 6, 1999.

14. Benjamin Harrison Gilmore to Gilmore family, September 19, 1917, Carrie H. Gilmore Collection, Butler County Historical Society, El Dorado, Kans.



An “army” of laborers and craftsmen worked feverishly into the fall of 1917 to construct buildings and put Camp Funston in working order.

First call at 5:45 A.M. Roll Call at 5:55. Mess at 6:00. Drill from 7:30 to 11:30 with only a few minutes rest. Dinner at 12:00. Back to drill at 1:00 P.M. until 4:30 when we have an hour to play; ball, football, games of all kinds. Roll call again just before supper. Then after supper we are off until 9:45 when we are supposed to be in our barracks. “Lights Out” at 10:00 P.M.<sup>15</sup>

While quite readable, Gilmore’s letters contain numerous grammatical errors and misspellings that may seem unusual from a college graduate.

For many men, learning their left foot from their right became the most important task in marching. The training schedule did emphasize drilling (marching) with various classes interspersed to break up the monotony of camp life. On October 17 company commanders received the following training schedule:

First Period—The Advance  
Second Period—Setting Up Exercises  
Third and Fourth Periods—Squad Drill, Close Order  
Fifth and Sixth Periods—English Bayonet Work  
Seventh Period—Squad Drill, Close Order  
Eighth Period—Practical Guard Duty  
Ninth and Tenth Periods—First Aid  
Eleventh Period—Duties of Messengers  
Twelfth Period—Squad Drill  
Thirteenth Period—Recreation, Athletic.<sup>16</sup>

By November the emphasis shifted from drill to specialized training and other specific duties associated with

15. Gilmore to family, September 23, 1917, Gilmore Collection.

16. Dienst, *History of the 353rd Infantry Regiment*, 9.



Benjamin H. "Harry" Gilmore, a 1914 graduate of Kansas State Agricultural College and a 1917 draftee from El Dorado, with his twin sister Carrie.

becoming a soldier.<sup>17</sup> Besides drilling, the men engaged in physical fitness training, obstacle courses, marksmanship, field maneuvers, weaponry, and general training classes. Additional duties included mess, guard, fire watch, and trash and clean up, better known as police duty.

17. *Ibid.*, 10.

Many men received inoculations for the first time in their lives while at the cantonment. Disease outbreak was a constant fear in the camp, which made vaccinations and quarantines a necessity. Typical diseases included measles, mumps, diarrhea, tuberculosis, smallpox, chicken pox, meningitis, typhoid, and diphtheria. "They run us through like a bunch of cattle," Gilmore wrote. "One man hit us on the left arm with alcohol and the next one painted a spot under our right arm & back a little on the back with Iodine & then a Dr. scratched our arm & the next one stuck us in the back. It made a lot of the men pretty sick."<sup>18</sup> For some the inoculation for small pox proved fatal. Although the men were vaccinated, they were still susceptible to disease, and many found themselves placed in quarantine, often for a month or more.

In addition to training, the army ran various tests on the men and came up with very surprising results. Farm boys seemed to have made the best soldiers even though they had the least education, required a longer period of training, and were not as familiar with recreational games, which enabled the men to work in teams.<sup>19</sup> Although these "boys" lagged behind in formal education and teamwork skills, their physical fitness could not be denied. According to Colonel Leonard P. Ayres's postwar statistical summary, the highest percentage (70 to 80 percent) of men passing their physical examinations came from the Central Plains.<sup>20</sup> Major General John F. Morrison, training and instruction commander, believed the best recruits came from "small towns and rural districts" rather than the "slums of the big cities."<sup>21</sup>

The food was another area of concern for all men, both enlisted and officer. Camp Funston enjoyed a close proximity with Fort Riley's school for cooks and bakers, and special arrangements allowed the Eighty-ninth's cooks and bakers to train there. Civilian cooks were employed until the regiment's

18. Gilmore to family, September 23, 1917.

19. Farwell, *OVER THERE—The United States in the Great War*, 62.

20. Colonel Leonard P. Ayres, *The War With Germany—A Statistical Summary*, 2d ed. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), 20–21. The percentage of men passing their physical exams were: 70 to 80 percent from North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Wyoming, New Mexico, Minnesota, Iowa, Arkansas, and Kentucky; 65 to 69 percent from Montana, Missouri, Louisiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Mississippi, Alabama, Indiana, Ohio, West Virginia, North Carolina, Florida, and Maryland; 60 to 64 percent from Oregon, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Virginia, Tennessee, South Carolina, and Georgia; 50 to 59 percent from Washington, California, Arizona, Colorado, Michigan, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine.

21. Farwell, *OVER THERE—The United States in the Great War*, 61.





*Camp Funston enjoyed a close proximity with Fort Riley's school for cooks and bakers, but food remained an area of concern for all men, both enlisted and officer. Food was an important subject in soldiers's letters home, especially, it seems, among men who had raised their own produce and fresh meat on the farm.*

army-trained cooks filtered back to their units. Food was an important subject throughout Gilmore's letters. Out of his seventy-three letters home, thirty-five made references to meals. Another Kansas soldier, Ralph W. Clark from Barnes, also commented about the food in his letters home.<sup>22</sup> Both men were farmers who raised their own produce and fresh meat, so it is not surprising that food was a frequent topic.

Once the men settled into their training routines, camp life did not seem too bad. They were allowed to listen to music, play games, and have visitors in the barracks. "We got a Victrola [for] \$75," Gilmore wrote, and "they play it all the time now."<sup>23</sup> Clark, who arrived at Camp Funston during the first week in October, was assigned to Company G, 353d Infantry Regiment until he transferred to the Thirty-fifth Division in April 1918. In his second letter home he wrote, "They got a piano and a violin, a football and basketball and most everything you could think of." Later that month he wrote, "G Co. has a victrola now. We all dug fifty cents a piece and we have some fine music."<sup>24</sup> Surprisingly, visitors had open access to the camp until orders restricted their presence. "They made a new ruling about visitors,"

Gilmore wrote on October 24, 1917, "Women can come to the Y.W.C.A. and to the depot & with a permit can drive over the grounds. There was [sic] so many women around the barracks that they made this ruling." A few months later he told the family, "They are getting some very strict rules now. Civilians are not allowed in camp after 5 P.M. and cannot enter the barracks except on the first Sat. and Sun. of each month or on holidays."<sup>25</sup>

During evening hours the men were encouraged to write home to family and friends. They had access to free writing material and could receive packages while in training. It was not uncommon to send the men baked goods, especially cookies and cakes, by mail. The *Ladies' Home Journal* printed various recipes for cakes that would endure shipment to camps and overseas.<sup>26</sup>

As training progressed through 1917, holidays were not ignored. Holiday passes were very limited, however, so the majority of men had to celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas at Camp Funston. In his letter of December 2, Clark mentioned the elaborate Thanksgiving meal: "We had Turkey, mashed potatoes, dressing, biscuits, celery, cranberrys, pumpkin pies and coconut cake and bannans."<sup>27</sup> Between

22. Ralph W. Clark to family, Ralph W. Clark Collection, Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society.

23. Gilmore to family, October 5, 1917, Gilmore Collection.

24. Clark to family, October 14, 24, 1917, Clark Collection.

25. Gilmore to family, January 7, 1918, October 5, 1917, Gilmore Collection.

26. *Ladies' Home Journal* 34 (December 1917): 50.





*Camp life was not so bad once the men settled into their training routines. They played games, entertained visitors, and listened to music on the Victrola. Above, soldiers inside the Y.M.C.A. enjoy this little diversion from regular army life.*

Thanksgiving and Christmas, Clark contracted measles and spent Christmas at the Fort Riley base hospital. Gilmore celebrated Christmas with his division and attended a special program sponsored by the soldiers. The next day Gilmore wrote to his family describing Christmas day:

They had quite a program, some sack races and a lot of that kind of stuff and some roping, wild horse riding, rode some wild mules, steers and a regular wild west show. . . .In the afternoon we had a "sham" battle. The Indians were supposed to attack the supply train and then we were to rush in and take it away from them. The supply train consisted of about 50 wagons filled with Red Cross presents. There was a package for each man in camp. . . .My package contained a knife (a good one 60 cents was marked on it), a pillow case, a large kahki handkerchief, a Testament, a corncob pipe, sack of tobacco, box of matches, lead pencil, can of menthalotum [*sic*], a writing tablet, envelopes, & a checkerboard. . . .They had quite a display of fireworks at night. The usual sky rockets, etc. They were fired from a big hill just above the camp so everybody could see them. They wound it up with a picture of Maj Gen Wood displayed in various colors. It was very good. We had a big dinner, turkey, cranberries, pudding, and everything we could eat. Some nuts and candy.<sup>28</sup>

27. Clark to family, December 2, 1917, Clark Collection.

28. Gilmore to family, December 26, 1917, Gilmore Collection.

During the winter of 1917–1918 many men found themselves either in quarantine or at the base hospital recovering from measles or mumps or another contagious disease. Both Gilmore and Clark spent most of January and February at the hospital and in quarantine. Once deemed fit, they returned to their units to continue training.

In March 1918 Gilmore trained in the field and trenches learning how to use the rifle grenade and the bayonet and practicing other trench maneuvers.<sup>29</sup> Clark bided his time along with the others awaiting transfers from the 353d to the Thirty-fifth Division. But instead of joining the Thirty-fifth at Camp Doniphan, Oklahoma, the men left Camp Funston on a train to Camp Mills, New York, to join the division for its embarkation to France. In April, Clark left Company G (353d Infantry, Eighty-ninth Division), having been reassigned to Company M, 140th Infantry, Thirty-fifth Division.

Training did not ease up during March and April as Camp Funston continued to acquire draftees. On April 27 commanding officer Colonel Reeves of the 353d met with all company commanders and informed them that the division would soon embark for France. A sense of intensity pervaded the 353d and the Eighty-ninth as training increased for all men and new replacements. Most leaves and passes ceased, and rumors became rampant.<sup>30</sup>

29. Gilmore to family, March 17, 25, 1918, *ibid*.

30. Dienst, *History of the 353rd Infantry Regiment*, 19.



*Training intensified for the 353d Infantry during April and May 1918 as the entire division anticipated early departure for the East Coast and then France. Here a Red Cross medic practices his vital duty during training exercises at Camp Funston.*

On April 29 A.B. Callaway from Newton traveled via a troop train to Camp Funston. He went through the same “welcome aboard” army ritual as had Gilmore and Clark but was not assigned immediately to the Eighty-ninth Division. Instead, all new draftees spent their initial days at a detention camp, the 164th Depot Brigade. During this time Callaway received his uniforms and inoculations, learned about drill and the various military duties and classes, and was issued a rifle. Seventeen days later Callaway found himself assigned to Company I, 353d Infantry, Eighty-ninth Division.<sup>31</sup>

Callaway, along with others having less than one month’s training, was heading overseas to fight. Many late arrivals never had the opportunity to learn marksmanship or even fire their rifles prior to entering combat. Supposedly six months was the optimum training time for soldiers. But because of the urgent call for divisions in the spring of 1918, thousands of soldiers did not receive this essential training. Gilmore and Clark were fortunate to have entered the army in the fall of 1917 and to have had four months training, less the time spent in quarantine and the base hospital.

On May 16 General Wood received official orders to send his division to Hoboken, New Jersey, for transport to France. Two days later Colonel Reeves received his copy

of this order along with further instructions from General Wood. It was time to move out. Packing and loading equipment and men of the 353d began on May 25. Eight trains transported the regiment to New Jersey, all under the cloak of secrecy—no letters to family and friends and no mention of the camp or unit designation.<sup>32</sup> Once the 353d arrived at Camp Mills near Hoboken, both Gilmore and Callaway wrote in detail about their trip east.

At Camp Mills, personnel completed last-minute paperwork and details, checked equipment, and ensured that soldiers had complete outfits, the payroll records were current, and the passenger manifests were complete.<sup>33</sup> The men received twenty-hour passes with which to take in the sights of New York City. Prior to leaving Camp Funston, Gilmore had been promoted to corporal, which garnered him a six-dollar per month increase and responsibility for a squad. He and a couple of friends took advantage of the passes and ventured into the “Big Apple.” “We got down on Broadway about 5 P.M. and walked around over the busy part of the city,” Gilmore reported. “We saw several 20 story buildings and a lot of people. Wanted to go to Long Island but we didn’t figure that we had time enough so we just looked around over what we could see by walking

31. A.B. Callaway, *With Packs and Rifles* (Boston: Meador, 1939), 11, 19.

32. Dienst, *History of the 353rd Infantry Regiment*, 19–21.

33. *Ibid.*



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around.”<sup>34</sup> Callaway’s recollection alluded to the fact that because some previous misbehavior in the city, passes were cancelled, and he never had the opportunity to see New York City.<sup>35</sup>

Prior to going aboard ship, General Wood received orders relieving him of command of the Eighty-ninth Division. He remained in the states while Brigadier General Frank L. Winn assumed command as the Eighty-ninth left the shores of New Jersey on June 3, 1918. Three British ships, the *H.M.S. Karmala*, *H.M.S. Pyrrhus*, and *H.M.S. Caronia* transported the men of the 353d across the Atlantic. Many soldiers found the crossing a very miserable experience. Callaway wrote a vivid account of the ocean voyage describing lifeboat drills, seasickness, cramped quarters, terrible food, and the constant fear of German U-boats.<sup>36</sup> An ocean crossing usually took ten days.

The Eighty-ninth disembarked on June 16 in Liverpool, England, and made its way via train to a rest camp near Winchester. A few days later the division moved on to the port town of Southampton, where it embarked and crossed the English Channel into France. Although the troops had little time in England, Gilmore described the countryside as “sure pretty country, small farms but they look nice. Have sure seen some good horses. Cattle & horses are so shek [sic] and in nice shape.”<sup>37</sup>

Once the Eighty-ninth arrived at Le Havre, the 353d marched five miles from town to a rest camp. The next day they marched back to Le Havre, loaded up in French railroad boxcars known as “Hommes 40, Cheveaux 8” (forty men or eight horses), and traveled into the country to the AEF’s Reynel Training Area. The entire Eighty-ninth settled into its designated training grounds roughly sixty kilometers from the front line.<sup>38</sup>

The 353d established its headquarters along with the First Battalion at the village of Manois, with the Second Battalion located at the town of Saint Blin, and the Third Battalion at the town of Rimaucourt.<sup>39</sup> Life in these villages

proved challenging for the soldiers. Besides the language barrier were the issues of billeting and cleanliness. Officers received first choice of rooms in local homes while the enlisted men were left to find barns and haylofts in which to sleep and share with the livestock. The soldiers found the rural French culture very different in its practice of waste disposal, or lack of disposal. Ample piles of manure and waste lay about in the streets and next to houses creating unsanitary conditions. All water had to be boiled or chlorinated before use.<sup>40</sup> To try and bridge the language gap, soldiers attended classes to learn basic French. But for many this proved an unsuccessful task.

Once the soldiers left America they had to adhere to strict censoring guidelines when writing letters. They could not mention their location or the specific number of soldiers killed or wounded. Letters from the 353d described the countryside, towns, farming methods, and the “backwardness” of the French people. “This is a very pretty country,” Gilmore wrote. “I was a little surprised at the size of the farms at one place we passed. One place I saw three mowing machines in one field.” Later he commented on the old-fashioned farming methods: “their mowing machines only cut a 4 ft. cut and they do a good deal of the cutting with a scythe. The people in these old countries are so far behind the times in some ways. You can see the old people that can hardly go with a big pack of wood or hay on their backs.”<sup>41</sup> A member of the 353d, William H. Addison with the Machine Gun Company, wrote his family regarding one French town that was “centuries old and as far behind the times. The houses are built of stone and have either tile roofs or singled with flat slabs of stone with a few thatched ones scattered around. You have seen pictures of old places that is much like this in character.”<sup>42</sup>

Once the Eighty-ninth settled in, training began immediately. Soldiers became indoctrinated in the art of war. They learned how to snipe, construct and repair trenches and entanglements, how to carry out trench raids, make and use camouflage, hone their marksmanship skills, perfect bayonet movements, and use live grenades. While their training was intensive, there were moments of levity. The Eighty-ninth celebrated the Fourth of July with speeches

34. Gilmore to family, June 2, 1918, May 18, 26, 1918, Gilmore Collection.

35. Callaway, *With Packs and Rifles*, 21.

36. *Ibid.*, 24–36.

37. Gilmore to family, June 18, 1918, Gilmore Collection.

38. Dienst, *History of the 353rd Infantry Regiment*, 26; English, *History of the 89th Division*, 44.

39. World War I battalions comprised one thousand officers and enlisted men. Each battalion contained four companies. First Battalion: Companies A, B, C, D; Second Battalion: Companies E, F, G, H; Third Battalion: Companies I, K, L, M.

40. English, *History of the 89th Division*, 45–46.

41. Gilmore to family, July 7, June 28, 1918, Gilmore Collection.

42. William H. Addison to family, June 26, 1918, box 1, Collection 49, Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society.





Before the end of June 1918, the "All Kansas" Regiment disembarked in France and soon, at Le Havre, loaded up in French railroad boxcars known as "Hommes 40, Cheveaux 8" (forty men or eight horses) for a trip to the AEF's Reynel Training Area. The entire division settled into its designated training grounds roughly sixty kilometers from the front line.

and sports. Callaway spent the day participating in competitive games, washing his clothes, and writing letters to family and friends back home.<sup>43</sup> In honor of Bastille Day (July 14), the French equivalent to Independence Day, the First Battalion of the 353d was selected to join in the celebration at the AEF headquarters in Chaumont. The First Battalion paraded before commanding general John J. Pershing and his entire staff.<sup>44</sup> Because Company D was part of the First Battalion, Gilmore was present at the celebration and wrote to his family describing the day's activities:

We marched in the big parade on Sun P.M. passed by the Gen. and marched around the town for a couple of hours and then we spent the rest of the time seeing the city. They had the town decorated with flags. There was quite a few French troops, and organizations represented in the parade. A band stood by the reviewing stand and while we marched by they played "The Yanks are Coming." They fed us well

while we were over there hot biscuits for supper, pancakes and syrup for breakfast & beef stake for dinner all we could eat too.<sup>45</sup>

With more than a month of intensive training, the Eighty-ninth received orders to move to the front and relieve the Eighty-second Division. On August 3 and 4 the 353d boarded trucks and traveled to the Lucey Sector in the southern part of the Saint-Mihiel salient. This area was known as a quiet sector "to which green troops could be sent for their first contact with the enemy, and to which exhausted divisions of both combatants could be sent to perform perfunctory service in holding the line."<sup>46</sup>

Throughout August and into September the three battalions of the 353d alternated occupying the area around the town of Limey. The remains of trenches, entanglements, and dugouts littered the sector, and curious

43. Callaway, *With Packs and Rifles*, 56.

44. Dienst, *History of the 353rd Infantry Regiment*, 28; English, *History of the 89th Division*, 48.

45. Gilmore to family, July 15, 1918, Gilmore Collection.

46. English, *History of the 89th Division*, 55; Dienst, *History of the 353rd Infantry Regiment*, 45.



*Intensive training, which included the proper use of the all-important gas mask, continued for more than a month after the Kansas boys arrived in France.*

soldiers spent their time exploring them until a memorandum ceased such wanderings. The view of “no man’s land” from Limey toward the German line “was green and wide and sprinkled thick with poppies.”<sup>47</sup> Although a quiet sector, the soldiers received their first experiences of incoming shells, shrapnel, gas, night patrols, aerial bombings, and machine-gun fire. By the first week of September the area changed from “quiet” to “active” as patrols increased and ventured into the enemy lines. Gilmore, a rifle grenadier squad leader, described an early morning encounter with a German patrol:

Fritz he took a notion to come over the other morning just before Breakfast. . . . We gave him a ration of grenades and bullets. It seemed a little hard to take for several of them didn’t go back. We got 8 prison-

ers and killed. It was reported 12 more killed in the [censored] wire somewhere but I don’t know whither it was true or not. There seemed to be quite a few of them came over for they met with four or five of our different outposts which were quite apart. . . . We had quite a little excitement for awhile throwing grenades and shooting and their artillery was throwing shells pretty close. Not a man got hurt at our post.<sup>48</sup>

Callaway volunteered for a night patrol mission and crawled his way through “no man’s land” to within twenty feet of the German line. His patrol did not take any prisoners that night but merely inspected the wires and returned to its own line without losing a man. The soldiers were, however, extremely scared and relieved.<sup>49</sup> Time spent in the Lucey Sector experiencing live enemy fire helped prepare these soldiers for their next major task.

America’s first major battle involving draftees since the Civil War began on September 12. The mission was to reduce the Saint-Mihiel salient, but the campaign was critical for a variety of reasons. Success would prove that General Pershing’s decision to keep the American army together as one large fighting force instead of amalgamating it with the British and French armies was correct. Also it would prove that the Americans were capable fighters and worthy opponents for the Germans.

Ten divisions participated in the Saint-Mihiel offensive, with the Eighty-ninth taking its position along the jump-off line between two veteran divisions: the Second and the Forty-Second. The Eighty-ninth’s mission and orders were as follows:

This Division will attack in the general direction of Dampvitoux, Supporting the advance of the 42nd Division on our left *by exerting the main effort on our left* to include the Rupt de Mad, thence assist the advance of the 2nd Division, 1st Corps, by turning the Bois d’Euvezin, Bois de Beau Vallon and Thiaucourt from the west. By the capture of the east edges of the Bois Mort Mare, this division will assist the initial advance of the 2nd Division, 1st Corps. If the 2nd Division is delayed, the 89th Division will capture Thiaucourt and turn it over to the 2nd Division.<sup>50</sup>

48. Gilmore to family, September 9, 1918, Gilmore Collection. A rifle grenade weapon was a service rifle that could launch grenades from the end of the rifle barrel.

49. Callaway, *With Packs and Rifles*, 108–116.

50. English, *History of the 89th Division*, 95.

47. English, *History of the 89th Division*, 60; Dienst, *History of the 353rd Infantry Regiment*, 46–47.



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The Eighty-ninth began in earnest to organize and plan for the upcoming attack. Six days prior to the assault, the Eighty-ninth experienced a change of command. Commanding General Brigadier General Winn was relieved, and Major General William W. Wright assumed command of the division. General Winn took command of his old 177th Brigade from Colonel Reeves, who resumed commanding the 353d.

Because of the need for secrecy, Colonel Reeves did not give instructions to his battalion commanders until the evening of September 11. Quickly the order was passed down from battalion levels to platoon leaders. According to Dienst, the battle plan was simple. Attack the enemy on the right side of the Mort Mare Woods. The Second Battalion would lead the assault with the Third Battalion in support. Three companies from the First Battalion would guard the left flank of the attacking battalion. Another First Battalion company would liaison with the Second Division on the right side of the 353d. Accomplishing the first-day objects would bring the Third Battalion in and leapfrog the Second Battalion to continue fighting for the final objective. The First Battalion would be in support with the Second Battalion in reserve.<sup>51</sup> Moving to the jumping-off areas became somewhat confusing due to the scarcity of maps and compasses; roads were clogged with men and transport equipment, all moving about in the dark. The soldiers eventually found their assigned places and waited out the night until the morning's call to go "over the top."

The men in the lines had little chance to catch any sleep prior to the attack. Besides their nerves, the soldiers contended with "dismal, cold and rainy" weather. According to Eighty-ninth Division historian George H. English Jr., "the trenches were filled with water and mud . . . the tired troops plowed their way through the mud to their allotted positions or huddled in their trenches vainly trying to keep dry and to snatch a little rest."<sup>52</sup> To add to their miseries, at 1:00 A.M. the army's artillery barrage began and lasted until 5:00 A.M.

"More than a million rounds of ammunition were consumed in the artillery preparation," Dienst wrote. "All along the line the sky was lit up with flashes of heavy-caliber guns, distributed in depth for almost ten kilometers

to the rear."<sup>53</sup> Many soldiers who survived the war never forgot their first barrage and recounted their impressions in letters and books. "The air was full of the discharges, shrieks, and explosions of the shells from upward of 1500 batteries, or 6000 guns, massed along a front of forty miles where over a half million Americans were marching to the attack in the darkness of the night," Callaway reported.<sup>54</sup> Such was the spectacle that Gilmore wrote about it twice in his letters home. "Such a noise and confusion you can't imagine," he explained on September 20. "There was [*sic*] big guns shooting everywhere and the flash from so many guns made it almost as light as day." Once the barrage ceased, the Saint-Mihiel offensive began; soldiers left the trenches, going "over the top" to meet the enemy.

Eight days after the offensive, Gilmore described his first taste of combat:

I was a little excited when we first got out of our trench that morning but got over it as soon as we got started. We went through three strips of timber and run into some machine guns and snipers. I went quite aways before I saw a dead Hun. We only lost a few men and most of them were by shells. I heard the bullets from a machine gun whiz pretty close once but that was all except pieces of the shells bursting all around.<sup>55</sup>

Earl Bear with Company M, 353d, wrote to his wife:

We just made a big drive and I was in the first wave it was a little exciting at times but we sure got the prisoners. They seem to be glad to surrender although some of them tried to hide out. I found two that was concealed pretty good but not quite good enough, there was a hole dug beside a building and a door layed on it, I thought maybe there was a Dutchman in there so I jerked the door off and there were two Germans. They didn't like the looks of my six shooter so wasn't very long getting out of there.<sup>56</sup>

With time to reflect, Callaway wrote his account somewhat more dramatic and stylized:

53. Dienst, *History of the 353rd Infantry Regiment*, 72.

54. Callaway, *With Packs and Rifles*, 135.

55. Gilmore to family, September 20, October 3, 1918, Gilmore Collection.

56. Earl D. Bear to wife, 1918, Bear folder, box 3, Collection 49, Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society.

51. Dienst, *History of the 353rd Infantry Regiment*, 71.

52. English, *History of the 89th Division*, 96.



A portion of Harry Gilmore's letter home, eight days after commencement of the Saint-Mihiel offensive, in which he described his first taste of combat.

There it is! There's the shrill whistle! We sprang up over the trench ran to the left and then to the front. Then our section spread out. . . . We reached their wire, plunged through its tangled mass and leaped down into the trench. Meeting little opposition here we ran across it, and continued advancing. Their machine guns now were in our immediate front and the we attacked without a moment's delay.<sup>57</sup>

The men continued to fight and advance until September 16 when the campaign came to a successful conclusion. Throughout the four days of fighting, the Eighty-ninth exceeded its initial objectives and captured hundreds of German prisoners. On September 16 General Wright wrote in his diary:

General Pershing came here about 5:00 p.m. and congratulated the officers and the Eighty-ninth Division on the very good account they gave themselves. Said he appreciated the good work the division had done, that the people at home appreciated it, and most of all the Boche appreciated it. General Pershing was quite nice about the way the division had been handled and the way it conducted itself.<sup>58</sup>

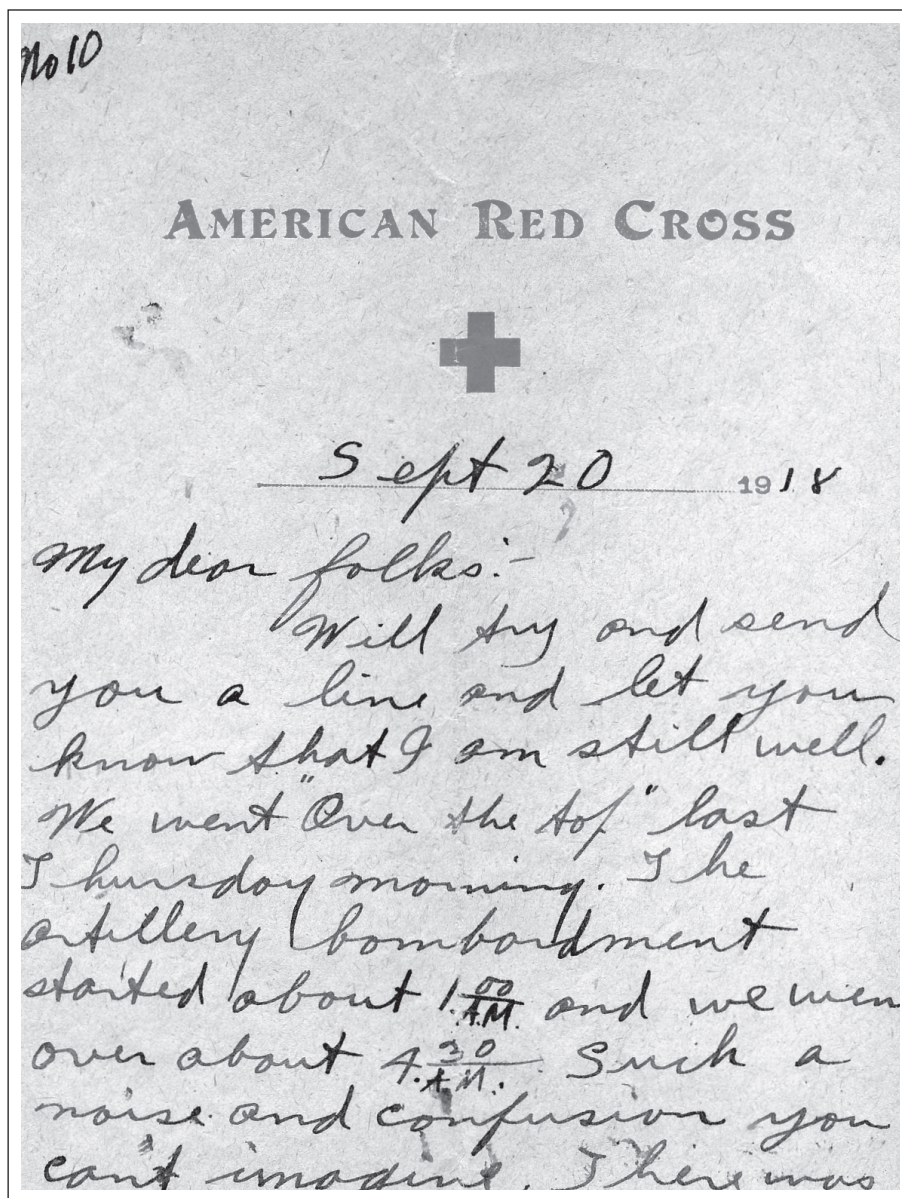
The Eighty-ninth's final tallies during the Saint-Mihiel offensive were two hundred killed, nine hundred wounded, and more than two thousand German prisoners taken.<sup>59</sup> By the second week of October the division was relieved and moved to the rear area for rest and to resupply and await further orders.

As the Saint-Mihiel campaign ended, the Meuse-Argonne offensive began and continued until the Armistice on November 11. This huge American military operation

57. Callaway, *With Packs and Rifles*, 137–138.

58. Wright, *Meuse-Argonne Diary*, 29.

59. Anne Cipriano Venzon, ed., *The United States in the First World War* *an Encyclopedia*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), 681.



comprised twenty-two divisions, 850,000 combat troops, millions of artillery shells, and the use of tanks and airplanes. The heavily forested, hilly, and ravine-filled terrain made fighting difficult.

On October 19 and 20 the Eighty-ninth moved into the Argonne forest to relieve the Thirty-second Division. The Eighty-ninth's objective was not to hold but to advance and capture Bois de Bantheville, which it accomplished on October 22. From October 22 to November 1 the division rested, received replacements, and resup-





*As the Saint-Mihiel campaign ended, the Meuse-Argonne offensive began and continued until the Armistice on November 11. This huge American military operation comprised twenty-two divisions, 850,000 combat troops, millions of artillery shells, and the use of tanks and airplanes.*

On November 1 the Eighty-ninth resumed its push against the enemy and proceeded to advance with the Second Division on its left and the Ninetieth Division on its right. The 353d encountered rough fighting but managed to capture the Barricourt Woods and the town of Tailly and pushed the Germans back across the Meuse River. Their objective now concentrated on capturing the town of Stenay. Rumors of peace were rife throughout the lines, but the fighting and killing continued. "German snipers and machine gunners were active and artillery threatened at all times," Dienst reported.<sup>61</sup> The soldiers could not let down their guard as they continued their northern advance toward Stenay.

By November 10 it became a race between the Eighty-ninth and Ninetieth Divisions to see which would first enter and capture Stenay. On the morning of the Armistice a patrol from Company A, 353d, crossed the Meuse River and cautiously entered Stenay around 9:30 A.M.

Fifteen minutes later the entire platoon entered the city. The soldiers searched the town for Germans as frightened citizens emerged from their homes to greet the Americans. The men of the 353d had accomplished their final objective. At 10:30 A.M. a Ninetieth Division patrol entered Stenay, and at 11:00 A.M. the Armistice was signed.

At the eleventh hour a silence descended upon both sides of the western front. Artillery, mortar, and machine guns ceased their deadly fire. Soldiers slowly emerged from their trenches. Gone was the fear of snipers. The men had gone "over the top" for the last time to the sound of peace.

plied for the offensive's next and final stage. When the 353d advanced into the Argonne, Gilmore was not part of the regiment. He suffered from a gas wound during the Saint-Mihiel offensive and ended up recuperating at a base hospital. He was released, however, and returned to the 353d in time to join the last drive of the war. "Got back to the company," Gilmore wrote, "and the next morning Nov. 1 we went over the top made a big advance and captured a lot of prisoners. Where I was they offered very little resistance and seemed glad to be taken. We are living in hopes that this is the last big drive and hoping that peace will be declared at once."<sup>60</sup>

60. Gilmore to family, November 8, 1918, Gilmore Collection.

61. Dienst, *History of the 353rd Infantry Regiment*, 142.





*Earl Bear, of the "All Kansas" Regiment, was from Brewster.*

Once the realization that the bloody war of four years had ended, celebration began in earnest. Cheers and laughter acted as a release for the soldiers celebrating their survival and the war's end.

Callaway was not with the 353d when the Armistice was signed. After recovering from an illness, he left the con-

valescent camp and began making his way back to his unit. On November 11 he was waiting at the train yards in the town of Nevers when French civilians ran out crying, "The war is over!"<sup>62</sup> Gilmore was with the 353d the morning of November 11 when it entered Stenay. Bear wrote to his wife the following day, November 12, from Stenay:

This leaves me just fine and dandy and in the very best of spirits for just this very reason, the war is certainly over all guns ceased firing yesterday at eleven and now we are wondering when will we start for the States. I believe I sure enough will be home to eat that turkey Xmas.<sup>63</sup>

Bear captured the overall sentiments of all the soldiers now that the war was over: when will they return to the states?

With the war finished, soldiers expected to return home immediately. They did not realize that plans were already being devised to determine which divisions could return and which had to remain as part of an occupying army. These reorganization plans resulted in the creation of the Third Army, better known as the Army of Occupation. It consisted of the First, Second, Third, Fourth, Thirty-second, Forty-second, Eighty-ninth, and Ninetieth Divisions. By November 15 the Third Army was operational.<sup>64</sup> Soldiers in these divisions would not be home for Christmas dinner.

As the Eighty-ninth prepared to become an occupying force, it experienced another change of command. General Wright was relieved as commanding general and assumed command of the First Corps. General Winn resumed his former position as commander of the Eighty-ninth and remained as such until the division demobilized in America.<sup>65</sup>

The 353d headquarters and the First Battalion remained in Stenay, while the other battalions quartered in the town of Nouart and in surrounding villages. During this time the soldiers "policed up" the town. They cleaned their quarters and made them as livable as possible by scrounging beds and stoves. In town the soldiers cleaned the backyards, swept the streets, and made ample use of the trash wagons. Also, they performed the unsavory task of burying the

62. Callaway, *With Packs and Rifles*, 196.

63. Bear to family, November 12, 1918, Collection 49.

64. English, *History of the 89th Division*, 253.

65. *Ibid.*, 254.





*Like the rest of America's two million fighting men in France, the Kansas soldiers of the Eighty-ninth Division eagerly awaited their return home. Finally, on May 13, 1919, after close to four months of occupation duty, the 353d boarded the U.S.S. Leviathan at Brest, France, and set sail for America.*

dead horses.<sup>66</sup> Commanding officers' numerous inspections ensured continued cleanliness and sanitary conditions.

Besides cleaning the town, the soldiers finally had the opportunity to bathe and see to their personal hygiene. They could discard their old battle-worn uniforms and shoes and receive new ones, along with new supply kits. Once cleaned and freshly supplied, the men enjoyed regular hot meals and mail calls. When not on police duty, the soldiers were assigned to guard duty around the town, and later, training schedules occupied the men's time. Life slowly resumed some resemblance of their Camp Funston days.

Soon rumblings about returning home could be heard among the soldiers. Many "civilian soldiers" believed they had joined the war, not the army, and when hostilities ended they were ready to go home. "To the American soldier the white flag of the enemy meant the end of the scrap," Dienst explained. "The miserable task was done, he was anxious to take up life where he had left off when his number was called. During the campaign days he gladly put his last ounce of energy into the struggle, scorning even

the suggestion of a halt until the victory was his, but it had not occurred to him that there was still danger of losing the fruit of victory even after the victory was won."<sup>67</sup> Commanding officers became concerned with the soldiers' desire to return home. They realized that maintaining discipline and keeping the men working would help eliminate future problems in their units.

On November 24 the Eighty-ninth left France and marched toward its assigned occupation area in the southwestern part of Germany, next to Luxemburg. During the first week of December the division arrived in Germany. Division headquarters settled in the town of Kylburg, and the 353d located at the region's northern point at Prum.

With no barracks to house them, the soldiers lived with German families, found them likable and their customs not as foreign as those of the French. Since most soldiers were from the Great Plains, they were familiar with German habits due to the German settlements in and around their homes and towns. They certainly found the Germans more sanitary than the French.

66. Dienst, *History of the 353rd Infantry Regiment*, 149; English, *History of the 89th Division*, 253.

67. Dienst, *History of the 353rd Infantry Regiment*, 150.

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The Eighty-ninth remained in Germany from December 1918 until April 1919. Life for the soldiers was filled with activity. They continued to drill and participate in field maneuvers, but the intensity was less since the war was over. Soldiers enjoyed playing sports, and several regimental teams formed. Further education was encouraged, and the men had opportunities to either complete high school or take college courses. Vocational classes also were offered for those desiring a trade and to enhance their employment prospects once they returned to America. Every evening some form of entertainment such as "moving picture" shows or concerts awaited the soldiers. Passes away from camp were available, but to keep soldiers from trouble areas, "R & R" (Rest and Relaxation) points were designated. One such area was in the south of France at Aix-les-Bains, which Gilmore visited when he received a seven-day pass.

After close to four months as an occupying army, the men of the Eighty-ninth learned they were going home. On April 23, for the last time, the entire division paraded before General Pershing at his headquarters in Trier, Germany.<sup>68</sup>

In May the division packed up and moved out by train to the French port town of Brest for embarkation. Prior to shipping out, all soldiers were militarily and medically inspected. If they did not meet requirements, they were removed and placed into a detainment camp until further orders. On May 13 the 353d boarded the *U.S.S. Leviathan* and set sail for America. In less than ten days, the Eighty-ninth arrived in New York. The train ride to Camp Funston was

delayed due to various town celebrations along the way in the men's honor. Finally, the 353d arrived at Camp Funston, and the separation process began. The army ensured that the men were medically fit, that all payroll records and administrative details were complete, and that all missing uniforms and accessory articles were furnished. During the first weeks of June 1919 the men of the 353d were demobilized and returned home, resuming their lives as civilians once more.

After leaving behind their military rank and becoming a civilian once again, the men did not forget their military experiences. During the 1920s many joined the American Legion, a new organization specifically for veterans. Also, divisional and unit history books were popular with the men as were attending army reunions to reminisce and re-fight the war.

Kansans assigned to the 353d Infantry Regiment, Eighty-ninth Division, proved their mettle and answered the question, "how would draftees fight and handle the stress of combat?" With no prior military experience, these men performed well under enemy fire and accomplished the objectives set forth by General Pershing, a demanding general with high expectations for all his divisions. In the end, Pershing favored the Eighty-ninth Division for its performance but did not recognize the Thirty-fifth Division. This National Guard division suffered through numerous command errors, and in Pershing's eyes it failed in its mission while the predominantly all-draftee division excelled. As a result, the Eighty-ninth made Pershing's list of top four AEF divisions out of more than twenty-five combat divisions. The Kansas draftees, largely a group of farmers, ranchers, and rural men, confirmed that they could fight as well or better than their regular army or National Guard comrades in arms. KH

68. English, *History of the 89th Division*, 321.